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‘The Noise, and the People’

Popular clamor *and Political Discourse in Latin Historiography*

Ellen O’Gorman

> . . . this account of an utterance requires a reorientation of our postures of attention and our grammatical mode of analysis. Our appreciation of an other’s speech requires the subjunctive.[1]

The supremely elite genre of Roman historiography, with its senatorial and imperialist narratives, might seem the least accommodating to any weaker voice, were it not that, in treating *res gestae*, the historian trains his focus on the *res populi Romani*. The people, however, often remain the voiceless object of historiographical discourse, spoken *of* just as in oratory they are spoken *for*. Sallust observed that ‘the influence of the plebs, diluted and dissipated across the multitude, was less potent’[2]—*plebis vis soluta atque dispersa in multitudine minus poterat* (*Jug.* 41.6)—a political inefficacy perhaps linked to the absence of a singular voice. Nevertheless, the noise of the multitude punctuates state business, and its preservation in the historical record is not merely for vivid effect. The Roman historians enfold the noise of the crowd into their narratives in such a way as to preserve its disruptive political effect. This is especially the case for the early books of Livy, which are particularly concerned with the emergence of the popular political voice, and with the question of how plebs and *patres* might effectively partake of the commonwealth. But rather than considering representative speeches by singular spokesmen, I want to maintain focus on the multitudinous, popular voice at the moment of its apparent political delegitimation—the moment where it emerges as *clamor* or noise. Such focus presents an

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[1] Panagia (2009: 60). I would like to thank the editors, Stephen Harrison and Sebastian Matzner, as well as Hannah-Marie Chidwick, Alexander Dressler, Ahuvia Kahane, Duncan Kennedy and Miriam Leonard for talking through this paper with me, and Brad Potter for reading through the final draft.

[2] All translations, unless otherwise indicated, are my own.

interpretative problem: what sort of account can one make of noise which allows its political status but does not assimilate it simply to discourse?

I would like to begin such an account by bringing *clamor* closer to discourse in the way that it raises issues about representation and quotation in historiography. This is a familiar question for anyone who considers the speeches of individuals as rendered by the historians, and usually engages with Thucydides' account of how he renders *logoi* in his narrative. (Thuc. 1.22.1) Readers now tend to recognize such *logoi* as part of the historian's representational strategy, while acknowledging the mimetic power of the speech, which creates the 'impression of hearing the precise words of an original speaker'.[3] Thus readers respond to the speech—even reported speech—as if it were quotation. I propose to adopt the same approach to the noise of the crowd in historiography, which bears the same elusive relation to words spoken by living bodies. When the historian evokes both the content and sound-effect of collective clamor, it provides us with an opportunity to read this as representation, and as if quotation. Such reading, moreover, draws attention to the borderline status of clamor between speech and noise, utterance and event.[4]

To approach this question, I turn to perspectives offered by Jacques Rancière and Julia Kristeva. Rancière's concept of how the political is inaugurated in the division between speech and noise is a starting point, but Kristeva's formulation of the semiotic enables a more detailed exploration of noise's affect and valency. Kristeva provides a (much debated) model for how noise subtends the rationalizing narrative of the status quo. Meanwhile, Rancière's presentation of 'the account' of speech offers a way of thinking about both political and narrative representation. It seems to me that both of these theories of how and where language intersects with the political open up a space for the expression and exploration of popular *clamor*.

[3] Laird (1999: 137).

[4] On utterance *as* event, Laird (1999: 150-2).

Dissonance is the quality which ties the aural effect of noise to its supposed lack of political purchase. An early example from Tacitus' *Histories* illustrates this very well:

> *Vniversa iam plebs Palatium implebat, mixtis servitiis et dissono clamore caedem Othonis et coniuratorum exitium poscentium ut si in circo aut theatro ludicrum aliquod postularent: neque illis iudicium aut veritas, quippe eodem die diversa pari certamine postulaturis, sed tradito more quemcumque principem adulandi licentia adclamationum et studiis inanibus*. (*Hist*. 1.32.1-2)

> Now the whole plebeian body filled the Palatine, intermingled with servile elements, and with the dissonant clamour of those demanding the slaughter of Otho and death to conspirators, as if they were requesting some game or other at the circus or theatre: and in these shouts there was no judgement or sincerity, since in the one day they were going to request opposite things with equal fervour, but it was the tradition of those clamouring in support of whichever *princeps*, marked by licence of flattery and meaningless enthusiasms.

The *dissonus clamor* reflects not only the mixture of plebeians and slaves in the crowd, but also the variety of their cries, some calling out *CAED'MOTHONIS* and others *CONIURATOR'MEXITIUM*—the elisions pointing up the confusion of these overlapping slogans.[5] Tacitus continues to dismiss any political validity to the *clamor* by likening it in both sound and content to the demands which the same crowd would present at the races and the shows, locations which are similarly contested as political or non-political sites. Finally, the lack of political judgement or consistency in the crowd is deduced from their change to a new chant later in the same day.[6] The dissonance at this point in time is amplified by the *diversa* of a later time; but this increasingly confused sound is at once highly resonant—as the *clamor* of the moment joins in with a generalised practice of *acclamatio*—and yet lacking in substance or meaning, expressing only the *studia inania* of the imperial *sordida plebs*.[7]

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[5] For elision in prose, cf. Riggsby (1991).

[6] As Tacitus will narrate at 1.45.1-2: 'they abused Galba, praised the judgement of the soldiers . . . kept demanding punishment for the consul designate'—*increpare Galbam, laudare militum iudicium . . . Marium Celsum, consulem designatum... ad supplicium expostulabat.* This later crowd is a mixture of senate and people.

[7] 'The filthy plebs, accustomed to circus and theatre'—*plebs sordida et circo et theatris sueta* (Tac. *Hist*. 1.4.3). Cf. Aldrete (1999: 102) on the shifting of imperial political topography towards places of ceremony and entertainment. On the soundscape of the circus, Nelis-Clément (2008).

In complex ways, then, the *clamor* of the plebs is here presented as pure noise, which, although it is denied political validity, retains political effect, and leaves its traces in the historical narrative. Tacitus draws on traditions of representing popular *clamor* here: a phenomenon at the borders of the political in every sense. Sometimes denied inclusion, it nevertheless serves to delineate the political, as I will go on to examine. Scholars such as Fergus Millar, Robert Morstein-Marx and Henrik Mouritsen have articulated the ways in which the plebs or the *populus Romanus* could express themselves in the political arena of the *contio*.[8] Morstein-Marx, in his insightful analysis of the voice of the people, identifies how the political nature of that voice was a matter of contestation, when he remarks that 'On one interpretation . . . any *contio* will have represented nothing less than the Voice of the Roman People; on another, however, it produced nothing more significant than the noisy squawking of the most questionable elements of the urban mob.'[9] Precisely this issue of noisy squawking and its non-significance is central to how Jacques Rancière conceptualises the delineation of the political, as he indicates in *Disagreement*: 'Politics exists because the logos is never simply speech, because it is always indissolubly the *account* that is made of this speech: the account by which a sonorous emission is understood as speech, capable of enunciating what is just, whereas some other emission is merely perceived as a noise signalling pleasure or pain, consent or revolt.'[10] For Rancière, then, it is not a question of identifying whether *clamor* has political force or not; the very account which polices the difference between speech and noise is in itself political. The noise that signals pleasure or pain introduces another element of these accounts which helps to police these differences: while speech or *logos* is of the rational mind, noise is of the sensual body. It is no surprise that popular noise in Roman historiography often emerges in response to food shortages, or threats to shelter posed by fire.

The irruption of bodily needs into the political sphere receives its most sustained treatment in Livy's account of the earliest years of the Republic, particularly in Book

[8] Millar 1998; Morstein-Marx 2004; Mouritsen 2001.

[9] Morstein-Marx (2004: 128). On the limited voice of the people, North (1990), Connolly (2006).

[10] Rancière (1999: 22-23).

2, where political representation—the institution of plebeian tribunes—arises out of popular concerns about loss of land and property, debt, and physical abuse suffered at the hands of creditors. As if in response to this politicizing of bodily needs, the senator Menenius Agrippa presents a justification of the senate's primacy in the state by recounting the well-known parable of the primordial body in rebellion, and thereby he identifies precisely the political issue at stake. It is worth looking in some detail at the tradition of this episode, not only because of what it has to say about political speech and bodily noise, but also because Livy's account of the parable—and of the plebeian secession—plays an important role in the formulation of Rancière's philosophy.

'So it pleased the senate to send a speaker to the plebs: Menenius Agrippa, an eloquent man and, because he originated from that class, dear to the plebs (*facundum virum et quod inde oriundus erat plebi carum*). This man, sent to their camp, is said to have told them nothing but this story, in that primitive and rough kind of speech (*prisco illo dicendi et horrido modo*): Once upon a time the human body was not like now, with all the parts feeling the same together, but each individual part had its own counsel, its own speech (*suum cuique consilium, suus sermo*). And the other parts of the body were aggrieved that the belly's demands were met by their responsibility, effort and tasks, while the belly remained inactive in the middle doing nothing but enjoying the pleasures they gave. So they conspired for the hands not to bring food to the mouth, for the mouth not to accept what was given, and the teeth not to chew. While they wanted in their anger to tame the belly by hunger, instead the very limbs and the whole body almost wasted away. Then it became apparent that the task of the belly was not useless, that it fed as much as it was fed, returning to all parts of the body in equal measure that element by which we live and flourish, spreading through the veins enriched by the intake of food—the blood. By comparing the internal sedition of the body as similar to the anger of the plebs against the senate, he changed the minds of people (*Comparando hinc quam intestina corporis seditio similis esset irae plebis in patres, flexisse mentes hominum*).' (Livy 2.32.8-11)

The image of the body politic here is one which organises its members in relations of production—a point made more explicitly in Dionysius of Halicarnassus (6.86.4). The belly appears only to consume, but the punchline of Livy's version holds back until the final word, *sanguis*, the recognition that it really produces the lifeblood of the body.[11] The choice of belly rather than head as ruling body part appears to reverse the hierarchy of rationality over sensuality,[12] but it is well-chosen as a rebuttal to the plebeian charge that the senate enjoys all the gains and suffers none of the pains of civic duty. Instead, it compels the plebeians to recognise what the senate does for them, and so in turn to resume their bodily toils in service of the state.

Rancière's analyses of this passage take a different tack by focusing, not on the content of the parable, but on the circumstance of Menenius' address to the plebs. He argues that the very act of address already concedes a political place for the plebs in a way that cuts across the ostensible message of the parable: 'Behind that fable's moral, which illustrated the inequality of functions in the social body, lay quite a different moral, one inherent in the very act of composing a fable. This act of composition was based on the assumption that it was necessary to speak and that this speaking would be heard; the assumption of a pre-existing equality between a wish to speak and a wish to hear . . . The moral of the very act of fabulation was thus the equality of intelligences.'[13] The political philosopher Martin Breaugh, who traces Rancière's reception of Livy's story through a specifically plebeian tradition, illuminates how this new politicizing could also proceed by proclaiming the dominance of reason over body: 'Agrippa was thus the one responsible for having created a space for egalitarian exchange, because he believed the plebs capable of understanding the meaning of his story and of *transcending the imperatives of the biological order*.'[14] Thus, instead of following the parable and taking the biological order as symbolic of the social order, Rancière and Breaugh concentrate on the political connotations of

[11] Ogilvie 1965 *ad loc*.

[12] Contrast the symbolism of the human head at the end of Livy Book 1.

[13] Rancière (1995: 82); cf. *id*. (1998: 25).

[14] Breaugh (2013: 94) (my emphases).

the speech act itself, which is organized around the distinction between what is and is not recognized as speech.

Indeed, the parable also resonates with the possibility and impossibility of speech, since it proceeds, in the way of parables, by assigning the power of expression (*sermo* Livy 2.32.9, *phōnē* DH 6.86.2) to all human body parts or members.[15] In one sense this capacity for speech is dramatically necessary for the members to quarrel and be reconciled. Indeed, in both Dionysius' and Plutarch's versions the members do no more than *talk* about their rebellion, and Dionysius' Menenius drives home the parallel by exhorting the plebs to leave off their hostile words against the senate: *epiphthonous phōnas* (3.86.5).[16] In another sense the impossible and necessary speech of the members already transcends the imperatives of the biological order. By locating the senate in the belly the parable denaturalizes the association of patrician dominance with the faculties of reason and speech; and this is more evident in Dionysius, where the members begin their rebellion by declaring their special contribution to the bodily whole. The mouth states 'that it speaks' (*to de stoma, hoti phtheggetai* DH 6.86.2), while the belly alone is silent in the face of its accusers. In Plutarch, the belly does speak back, and also laughs in mockery. Livy's account places the rebellion in the realm of action,[17] and this throws into sharper relief the comment that each bodily member possesses *suum consilium, suus sermo*: the power of speech is described but not instantiated.

Within the world of the parable, then, we might also postulate a new egalitarianism, in that speech seems to be equally impossible and necessary for each body part. Again, a resonance is set up with Menenius' address to the plebs, which emanates ostensibly from the senate, for whom he serves as mouthpiece, while Menenius himself emerges

[15] Dionysius further allows the members the capacity to hypothesize, while Plutarch casts the bodily exchange in the modes of accusation and mockery (*Coriolanus* 6.3).

[16] Dio's version of the parable carries out the process from speech to action by having the members *vote* on their rebellion against the belly (4.17.11).

[17] Also Florus 1.17.23.2.

from the belly of the plebs: a *facundus vir* and *quod inde oriundus erat plebi carus*.[18] The homophony of *orator* and *oriundus* points up that Menenius' speech and Menenius' body traverse the gulf between patrician and plebeian. Rancière refers to him as a 'class traitor'[19]—but which class does he betray?

The paradox of Menenius' speech is extended as on this occasion he speaks *prisco illo dicendi et horrido modo,* whether by virtue of his plebeian origin, or of the primitive nature of speech at that time.[20] Or perhaps he suspends his senatorial eloquence in order to speak in a way which appeals to the plebs, evoking the *concordia* his parable seeks to effect, by adopting the *sermo* appropriate to the body parts he addresses.[21] In either case, Menenius performs a sort of ventriloquism, as his speech emerges from a place he never quite occupies, creating a space where there was none before. Menenius' intervention counts as disruptive in Rancière's terms, because of his 'production . . . of a body and a capacity for enunciation not previously identifiable within a given field of experience, whose identification is thus part of the reconfiguration of the field of experience.'[22]

Rancière's analysis draws our attention away from the content or circumstance of popular *clamor*, towards its qualities as noise before it is made to make sense. Like Rancière, Davide Panagia concentrates on the disruptive and interruptive effects of noise within discourses of and about the political. He traces, through Bakhtin's study of 'speech genres', a way of rethinking utterance in terms of duration of noise rather than semantic units, so that interruption is figured as 'a condition of responsiveness'[23]

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[18] Livy is alone in claiming plebeian origin for Menenius. Dionysius introduces him as a mature and moderate senator (6.49.2), and has his supporters regard him as *andrōn aristokratikōn ton epiphanestaton* (6.57.1).

[19] Rancière (1998: 24).

[20] Ogilvie (1965: 313) implies both: 'Menenius is a plebeian and is supposed to speak *prisco illo et horrido modo.* To represent such archaic uncouthness directly would offend . . .' Smith (2010: 267-8) on this speech as part of the historiographical tradition.

[21] On Menenius as embodiment of *concordia*, Connolly (2007: 45). Cf. Momigliano (1942).

[22] Rancière (1998: 35). I would add that this disruption is registered and recorded by the historiographical narratives continued incorporation, accommodation, and marking of the parable as parable.

[23] Panagia (2009: 61).

rather than as an intervention only legitimated after the event and in a reconfigured field of experience. This is a point I want to return to later, though here it reflects upon Dionysius' extensive account of the embassy to the plebs, where each speech is framed and punctuated by *boē* and *throus*.[24] But, once they have established a different way of thinking about noise, Rancière and Panagia each turn to explore new spatial formations of the political. This represents a recurrent problem in thinking about noise in ways which resist both the hermeneutic imperative and the simple deictic gesture; that is, how does one trace the political work done by noise without either translating it into *logos* or simply attesting to it as *phonē*? Through reading Livy, later, we will see how the political effect of noise is read through a transformation of space which enables new forms of representation. But, before exploring how Livy stages this effect, I want to turn to Kristeva's concept of the semiotic, and its consonance with lalangue and glossolalia, as a way back to the noise of popular *clamor*, and the possibility for tracing this through historiography.

Particularly in *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Kristeva provides an account of a pre-Oedipal relation to what will become language, grounding it in the body before subjectivity, and positing its later violent repression as an effect of the dominant symbolic order. This is the order of the semiotic, located in the paradoxical maternal space of the *chora*. As she states 'the *chora* precedes and underlies figuration . . . and is analogous only to vocal or kinetic rhythm.'[25] In such rhythms, Kristeva suggests, the semiotic articulates connections not only between the zones of the fragmented body before subjectivity (the sphincters), but between the pre-subject and what will later be designated external objects (such as parental figures). 'Articulation' is glossed by Kristeva as 'in the largest sense of the word';[26] I believe this is to emphasize the *bodily experience* of vocal articulation.[27]

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[24] Compare the Alexandrians' punctuation of Germanicus' speech in *P.Oxy* 2435 recto.

[25] Kristeva (1984: 26)

[26] Kristeva (1984: 28).

[27] At the same time, bodily experience is not restricted to the body as we understand it in a post-infantile sense. We find an echo of this undifferentiated experience in the ancient texts which declare a continuum between popular noise and the natural world, often in the service of denying it political validity. The *locus classicus* is Plato *Rep*. 492b-c, but we might also consider the similes at *Iliad* 2.142-52 and *Aeneid* 1.48-54 (cf. Morwood 1998), or, in a different tenor, Horace *Odes* 1.20.

The plot of Kristeva's account is structured on the familiar psychoanalytic model of infantile development; indeed, she goes on to narrate the irruption of the symbolic order with explicit reference to Freud's myth of the primal horde. But her sense of what happens to the semiotic in language is my main interest here. While Kristeva concentrates on high art, and particularly on modernist poetry, as the site into which the semiotic will violently irrupt, some of her most distinctive formulations also provide a way to conceive of popular *clamor* as well. First, she draws attention to the semantic excess of poetry, the way in which it offers a pleasurable surplus of meaning: this challenges the symbolic order's claim to sufficiency, drawing attention to the semiotic dimension with its multiple articulations. The noise of the people is also given the quality of excess, but in a different way; it appears as excess because it is perceived to have a deficit of meaning often at the same time as it affords a surplus of pleasure: we note the reference to *studia inania* in the Tacitus passage with which I began. From the perspective which valorizes the economics of language exchange, this appears as 'the nonproductive expenditure of noise'[28] just as poetry can seem to be a 'harmless bonus'[29] to a socially useful discourse. Secondly, Kristeva draws attention to the bodily experience of rhythm and, later, of phonic repetition as the baseline of the semiotic *chora*, and as phenomena which are discernible not only in poetry but in a wide variety of speech acts both individual and collective.

Kristeva's initial focus on rhythm and sound as the vehicle for instinctual drives, in the opening to the second (untranslated) half of *La révolution du langage poétique*, is given further resonance by the echo of pulsation in the French term for 'instinct' or 'drive'—*pulsion*.[30] Rhythm and intonation as non-semantic components provide an apparatus for the instinctual drives. Kristeva sees this apparatus as emerging from music, into the melodically accented languages of antiquity, only to be transposed into

[28] Panagia (2009: 54).

[29] Kristeva (1984: 16).

[30] This is also the term insisted upon by Laplanche and Pontalis, as observed by their translator (1973, 216 n. *6*).

vernacular speech as syllabic rhythm marked by alliteration and homophony. It is telling that she sees this transposition also as a return to the modes of *popular* oral poetry.[31] The effect that Kristeva posits for this rhythmic dimension is a network of sound-sense which exceeds the semantic register of the utterance and approaches the semiotic *chora*: 'à travers les bases pulsionnelles de la phonation, les traits distinctifs du système phonémique . . . *articulent un réseau de sens constitué de différentielles phoniques et signifiantes*.' [32] ('Across the instinctual ground of phonation [the production of *phōnē*], the distinctive characteristics of the sound-sense system [sc. displacements, condensations, transpositions and repetitions] articulate a network of sense constituted by the differentials between phonic and signifying elements.') The mode of reading which Kristeva enjoins, therefore, does not either tune out the semiotic element, or forsake the symbolic functioning of language. It does not require us to translate *phonē* into *logos*, or to abandon interpretation for the deictic gesture. The focus on 'signifying differentials' instead draws our attention to the interplay between the semiotic and symbolic dimensions.

A reminder of the sensory appeal of rhythm and repetition, for both speakers and listeners,[33] may well alert us to the effects of particular recurring syllables in texts, which could be read as attempts to capture the *murmur populi* (and it is no coincidence that both these words are essentially syllabic repetitions). We can imagine a crowd seizing upon particular slogans which exploit syllabic repetition—one thinks of Suetonius' crowd chanting 'into the Tiber with Tiberius': *Tiberium in Tiberim* (Suet. *Tib*. 75.1), or of Horace's 'crowded people spurring the slackers on to war, TO WAR': *populus frequens/ ad arma cessantis, ad arma/ concitet* (Horace *Od.* 1.35.14-16).[34] Equally, repetition emerges as an effect of multiple speakers, who repeat and

[31] 'Transposition' is, of course, Kristeva's preferred term to describe the passage from one sign system to another, after what she perceived as the ideological hijacking and banalization of her initial coinage, 'intertextuality'. Kristeva (1984: 59-60).

[32] Kristeva (1974: 213; her emphases).

[33] Cf. Butler (2015: 59-68).

[34] Some editors propose *fremens* for *frequens* in Horace's text. On *arma* and *ad arma* as recurrent popular expressions, cf. Nisbet & Hubbard on Hor. *Od.* 1.35.15; Oakley on Livy 6.28.3; Ogilvie (1965) on Livy 3.15.5; Servius *ad Aen*. 11.453 calls this the *militaris vox*.

thereby transmit words across the crowd—a practice adopted in Occupy Wall Street as "The People's Mic".[35] Finally, we can extend our engagement with crowd noise as it is 'quoted' in the historians by speculating on the echo effect of any large group attempting to articulate the same words.[36] That is to say, the plebs may very well fill the Palatine with their cries of *caed'mothonis*, but even the most well-organized crowd will, in an open space, drift apart from each other, creating what we might now call a sort of sonic Mexican wave: *caed-caede-caed'mo-caed'mthonis-is-nis-onis*. The overlapping syllables form new relations, releasing wordlike combinations (here I detect a *decae* and a *sonis*, for instance); collectively, the crowd produces a sort of glossolalia, speech that is *like* a language. As Michel de Certeau observes, 'What utopia is to social space, glossolalia is to oral communication; it encloses in a linguistic simulacrum all that is not language and comes from the speaking voice.'[37] Here the rhythm of *clamor* not only reproduces the bodily articulation of the *chora*, it also appears as an effect of the political space: the echoing forum itself helps to create the linguistic simulacrum.[38]

To consider this phenomenon more extensively, let us return to the originary scene of plebeian politics, the second book of Livy, and the episode of the debt slaves (*nexi*) in chapters 23-24. Discussed at length by social theorists from Machiavelli to David Graeber, this episode provides a detailed elaboration of how, in Rancière's terms, a new space is designed as political. And this proceeds through outbursts of vocal and kinetic movement/energy of symbolic and semiotic power. It begins with the confused sound of the *nexi—fremebant* (23.2)—seething at the inequity of their civic duty to fight for Rome, when they are the prey of fellow-citizens in the economic sphere. The collective utterance is then exemplified by a solitary speaker, a veteran; here a new

[35] Dean (2016: 3). For more formal strategies in the Roman circus, Nelis-Clément (2008: 452).

[36] Aldrete, on the other hand, observes that syllabic repetition performs a function in enabling the crowd to pick up new slogans and to maintain *unison* in their chanting. His example from Dio of an extraordinary degree of unison, however, is clearly marked as extraordinary by the historian (Dio 76.4.3, 5). Aldrete (1999: 125-6).

[37] De Certeau (1996: 31).

[38] The echo effect will be amplified by the structures and surfaces of the imperial city. Augustus' well-known claim to have found Rome a city of brick and left it in marble (a more acoustically lively substance) would have transformed the civic soundscape. Cf. the acoustic analysis of the circus space by Nelis-Clément (2008).

space is opened up 'much as though it were an assembly'—*prope in contionis modum* (23.5). This is the effect of the veteran's initial physical movements: 'he rushed into the forum' and 'displayed his scars'—*in forum proiecit* (23.3) and *cicatrices ostentabat* (23.4)—as well as of the vocal movement of the *vulgus* or *turba* 'asking the cause of his dress, of his injuries'—*sciscitantibus unde ille habitus, unde deformitas* (23.5). The veteran's speech concludes with another physical movement: 'he displayed his back'—*ostentare tergum* (23.7), which sets off the *clamor* of the crowd and transforms the political space yet again: 'a mighty uproar arose. The disturbance was no longer confined to the Forum, but spread in all directions through the entire City'—*clamor ingens oritur. Non iam foro se tumultus continet sed passim totam urbem pervadit* (23.7). The sound gathers both *nexi* and allies, and brings them back to the central space: 'with shouting there is a rush into the forum'—*cum clamore in forum curritur*, or 'shouting INTO THE FORUM, they rushed there' (23.8).[39] Both throughout the city and back in the forum, the *nexi* imitate the veteran in gesture and sound: 'The debt slaves broke out into the streets from every side, and implored the Quirites to protect them'; 'they displayed their chains and other signs of abuse, saying this was their reward . . . '—*nexi . . . se undique in publicum proripiunt, implorant Quiritium fidem* (23.8); *multitudo. . . ostentare vincula sua deformitatemque aliam. Haec se meritos dicere . . .* (23.10-11). News of a Volscian attack does not unite the Romans against a common enemy; instead the plebs declare their absolute refusal to obey the levy. In response, the consul Servilius, whose temperament, we are told, inclined towards the people—*magis populare erat* (24.3)—addresses the plebs in a *contio*, and concludes with an edict which formally declares as unjust and unlawful the inequities which were the substance of the opening complaint: *edixit ne quis . . .* (24.6). From the grumble of *fremebant* to the declarative *edixit* we see how articulation moves from delegitimized noise to political *logos*, through the transformation of space.[40]

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[39] The association of *clamor* with *currere* is very common in historical narratives of group excitement: cf. the 'rhythmic crowd', Canetti (1962: 31-34).

[40] Fantham's passing comment on this—'a scene surely worthy of Monty Python' (2005: 214)—internalizes the elite dismissal of plebeian speech as mere noise/nonsense. In a more serious vein, Vasaly (2014: 102) de-authorizes the plebs by identifying their actions as incoherent and inarticulate.

The status of the vocal as one form of bodily articulation is crucial here, as evinced by the display of *cicatrices*, *vestigia* and *deformitas*,[41] which spreads through the crowd, keeping pace with the crowd's own movement through space, and the movement of *clamor*. The vocal dimension does not merely lend sound to these gestures: vocal articulation appears on a continuum with other movements of the body. Here I want to focus on the sound-effect of the collective utterances, beginning with the object of *fremebant*.

se foris pro libertatet imperio dimicantes *domi a civibus captos et oppressos esse.*	struggling abroad for liberty and empire at home captured and oppressed by citizens
tutior'min bello qu'min pace *et inter hostis qu'minter civis* *libertatem plebis esse* (23.2)	safer in war than in peace among enemies than among citizens is plebeian freedom

Of all the examples here, this is the one with the longest and most elaborated phrases—4 phrases for 29 words—while the interdependence of the phrases makes it difficult to isolate a conjectural slogan. The semantic emphasis on *libertas*, at the start and the end of the speech, receives its counterpoint in the syllabic repetitions recombining l, b/p and r: *LIBERtatet imPERIo . . . BELLo . . . LIBERtatem PLEBIs.*

The repetitions of the final collective utterance are far easier to spot, while the phrases are much shorter, and metrically more varied. While it seems less effective as a speech viewed in traditional terms,[42] it evokes more strongly the sense of discrete phrases taken up by a mob.

ultores superbiae patr'madesse [dicere] deos *[alius alium confirmare] ne nomina darent* *c'monibus potius quam solos perituros* *patres militarent* *patres arma caperent* *ut penes eosdem pericula belli* *penes quos praemiassent* (24.2)	gods avenge patrician arrogance do not give names to die with all rather than alone let patricians go to war let patricians take arms to them accrue the dangers of war to whom accrue the rewards

[41] Cf. Leigh 1995, reading these as a mode of expression which merits political status.

[42] Ogilvie 1965, 300: 'little originality . . . hackneyed . . . commonplace.'

There are more possibilities for reconstructing slogans here: the murmur of *ne nomina darent* replicates the way in which this injunction passes from one speaker to another, in an early version of the People's Mic. Also, the rhyming doublet *patres militarent* | *patres arma caperent* has sensory appeal in itself,[43] as well as contributing to the dominant phonic rhythm spread across the dense layer of syllables formed by p, b, t, r/l: *suPERBIae PATRum . . . POTIus . . . PERITURos PATREs miliTARENT PATREs arma caPERENT . . . PENEs eosdem PERIcula BElli PENEs quos PRAEMIassent*.

As Kristeva indicates, the network of sense emerges from the differential between phonic and semantic effects of the text. Both of these collective utterances have at their semantic base a negotiation of civic rights around the crisis point of war, responsibility for war, and the gains and losses of war.[44] In the first utterance, the question is the relation between *libertas* and *bellum*; in the second, by way of response, *bellum* is figured as the responsibility and punishment of the *patres*.[45] Conversely, the phonic effect of *bellum* is more fully integrated into the rhythm of *libertas-plebs* than that of *patres-peri-pere-praemi* etc.

For Kristeva, as for de Certeau, glossolalia and lalangue operate as 'borderline discourses',[46] spoken by patients in analysis, avant-garde poets, or those possessed by the Holy Spirit. While these language effects have consequences for language as a whole in its psychological, social and political aspects, the primary interest for Kristeva in particular is to ground the political subject in the desiring body: 'La contrainte majeure de ce nouveau dispositif sémiotique—de cette nouvelle rythmique—devient

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[43] This corresponds to what Aldrete (1999: 139) categorises as the 'equation-type' acclamation.

[44] Sallust outlines the same fundamental inequality in narrative mode: 'To the oligarchs accrued treasury, provinces, magistracies, glories, triumphs; the people were hard pressed by military service and poverty.'—*penes eosdem [paucos] aerarium provinicae magistratus gloriae triumphique erant; populus militia atque inopia urgebatur*. (*Jug*. 41.7) The elisions in the last four words articulate the connection between civic duty and unequal wealth in plebeian experience.

[45] Cf. Leigh (1995: 205) on this trope in the speech of Licinius Macer (Sall. *Hist*. 3.48.17f.).

[46] Kristeva (1983: 40-44); cf. Barzilai (1991: 295): 'this is a border, not a beyond, of language.'

l'*expérience* unique du sujet dans le procès signifiant, et sa base pulsionelle.'[47] ('The main constraint of this new semiotic system—this new rhythm—becomes the unique *experience* of the subject in the signifying process, and its instinctual basis.') Hence, her insistence on the psychoanalytic dimension of the political maintains her focus on personal subjectivity.[48] Since her formulation of the semiotic situates it before subjectivity, however, her account of how the semiotic irrupts within the symbolic—creating what she calls the 'subject in process/on trial'[49]—does not depend absolutely on the idea of the individual, and retains the potential to be considered with regard to the collective.

Unlike the texts studied by Kristeva, the voice of the crowd in historiography is elusive. In the reading of Livy above I have proceeded as if the words on the page were exact records of the words of the crowd, quotations rather than representations. I want to suggest, however, that, whether the words *have* survived or not, their particular sonic effect, and its psychological and political force, can be conjectured.[50] This is the issue raised by Panagia in the quotation with which this chapter began: turning to the subjunctive, we could argue that historiography attempts to capture the noise of the crowd through echoes or responses to the sonic effects of multiple voices. The repeated syllables I've highlighted, heightened by alliteration, homoioteleuton, and extensive elision, suspend the *clamor* of the people between quotation and representation.

Such effects are not, of course, exclusive to plebeian *clamor*: one only has to read ahead to Livy 2.28-29 to see these effects in both *contio* and senate. In elite speech, too, *clamor* is associated with a departure from rationality all the more deplorable in those whose education equips them for senatorial deliberation. Both Tacitus and

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[47] Kristeva (1974: 218). Noland (2005: 121-2) and Smith (1996: 102-5) from different perspectives express disappointment in Kristeva's emphasis, and in the conclusions of her semiotic reading of Mallarmé.

[48] On Kristeva's Maoist engagement here, cf. Brandt (2005: 29-32); Sjöholm (2005: 13-16).

[49] Kristeva (1984: 102).

[50] Analogous to this is the issue raised by Kristeva (1983: 40) about intonation as 'an archaic component of syntax' previously neglected in psycho-linguistics; cf. Noland (2005).

Pliny, for instance, speak of the dissonant sounds produced when senators *en masse* give way to unreasoning pity (Tac. *Ann.* 14.45; Pliny *Ep*. 2.11.6-7). But we can also see the sonic effects of *clamor* consciously adopted as rhetorical artifice for the purpose of persuasion. Here I have in mind Robert Morstein-Marx's perceptive analysis of Cicero's demagoguery in his *Fourth Philippic*,[51] as well as the highly provocative remarks of Joy Connolly on a fragment of Cato the Elder:

> The speech is evidence that Cato's message lies not only in his argument but also in the way it draws attention to the quality of the words as they roll off his tongue: the grain of their timbre, their intimate connection to Cato's physical being. Its sensual assonance and granulated crackles exert the power of the body beyond the limits of the body to demand assent . . . the result is intensified, transsomatized message—the essence of the "hyperclarity" of the traditional expression of authority.[52]

Connolly suggests that sound as the vehicle of authority extends the boundaries of the body. As she argues here and elsewhere, the elite orator's appeal to the *populus* reconstitutes the parameters of the political space so as to compel assent to the apparatus of political representation: the senate, the lawcourts, the orator himself. At the same time, however, the 'transsomatized message' Connolly identifies can be understood as a reminiscence of experience before the break of the symbolic, where no distinction is felt between what will later become one's own body parts and the bodies of others. As we have seen Kristeva's account of that experience in the semiotic *chora* is mediated through vocal and kinetic movement, where again no distinction is felt between the movement of the voice and that of any other body part. Cato's voice works upon the crowd as a reminiscence of such experience, in a space where the crowd *qua* crowd is already generating similar sensory reminiscences through the partial surrender of individual mentality to that of the group. We are reminded that orators speak of their success in 'moving the audience'.

This has consequences for the construction and maintenance of singular, elite authority over the multiple, heterogeneous crowd, particularly in relation to

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[51] Morstein-Marx (2004: 139-43).

[52] Connolly (2007: 51).

knowledge. The sounds which recall the semiotic *chora* require no expertise in their production, yet their emergence in historiography and rhetoric attests to the individual author's knowledge and skill in mimesis, analysis and persuasion. We seem to capitulate once more to the distinction between speech and noise, and to accord greater authority to the former, unless we posit *clamor* as the expression, not of shared irrationality, but of an equality of intelligence—what was presumed by Menenius Agrippa when he spoke to the plebs.

To consider this further, I want to turn to Cicero's remarks which are very frequently cited in support of the idea that rhythm is a phenomenon universally understood by humans, regardless of learning.[53] What is particularly interesting about Cicero's overlapping comments in *Orator* (168, 173) and *De Oratore* (3.195, 196, 198) is how *clamor* is seen to attest to the movements of listening and understanding in ways suggested by Panagia when he formulates 'interruption [as] a condition of responsiveness'. In designating these as movements rather than actions, I want to suggest that they too partake of the semiotic. Yet in these scenes, the vocal-kinetic energies of the crowd—exclaiming and listening in a synaesthetic continuum[54]—are used as a benchmark for the orator to measure his performance in that most technical branch of his skill. The semiotic thus feeds back to the symbolic, and underwrites its authority.

The opposition Cicero plays with here is between *ars/ratio* and *natura*, but he emphasizes throughout that nature has bestowed an extraordinary capacity for the unlearned to exercise judgement on the art of rhythmic speech: 'For everyone can discern by some sensibility, without any skill or reasoning, what is correct or incorrect in the practice of skill and reasoning'—*Omnes enim tacito quodam sensu sine ulla arte aut ratione quae sint in artibus ac rationibus recta ac prava diiudicant* (*de Orat*. 3.195). This judgement is firmly grounded in the body: throughout both expositions Cicero emphasizes the sensory aspect of both the orator's sentences and the audience's

[53] Wilkinson (1970: 154-5); Connolly (2007: 225-7); Valiavitcharska (2013: 1-2); Arena (2013: 200).

[54] For synaesthetic responses to different art forms, see Porter (2013) and, more generally, Butler/Purves (2013).

natural apprehension of rhythm. Here the idea that somebody may *not* feel rhythm leads him to imagine a human without human attributes, but particularly without human ears: 'those who cannot perceive, I wonder what ears they have, or what they have that is like a human'—*qui non sentiunt, quas auris habeant aut quid in his hominis simile sit nescio* (*Or.* 168). The ears become the central body part for his discourse: 'nature has grounded the capacity to judge speech in our ears'—*vocum iudicium ipsa natura in auribus nostris conlocavit* (*Or*. 173). The continuity between the movements of listening, seeing and calling out, delineated by Cicero's continual slippage between the visual and the aural, evokes the pre-subjective *chora*. Cicero is able to see the vocal response of the audience—*exclamare vidi*—just as he imagines their ears on the lookout for rhythmic clausulae—*exspectant aures* (*Or.* 168). Human understanding of sound and language is strongest, Crassus claims in *de Oratore*, 'because it is ingrained in our common senses'—*quod ea sunt in communibus infixa sensibus* (*de Orat.* 3.195). And this phrase *communibus sensibus* evokes the idea of senses common to humanity, as well as senses shared in the experience of crowd-as-body:[55] the senses which work together in the visible and responsive moment of *clamor*.

Crucially, the audience response here operates either as a corrective to faulty rhythm, or an affirmation of its success: the assemblies shout out, when phrases are well-turned (*Or.* 168); the theatre shouts if a verse is too short or too long (*Or*. 173) or if a syllable is given the wrong quantity (*de Orat.* 3.196). *Clamor* thus arrives at the status of 'the account', policing the distinction between proper and improper speech, while it resists becoming *logos*.

We know from political narratives that *clamor populi* is a borderline discourse; sometimes no more than mere noise, at other times accorded the status of a message, bearing the Will of the Roman People.[56] It is also, as I hope to have shown, a borderline discourse in its linguistic and sonic effects, underlying the discourses of rhetoric, and

[55] Mankin (2011: 286) likens *communibus sensibus* to the *communi mente* of *de Orat*. 3.115, which he glosses as an 'almost Freudian expression' (204); cf. Connolly (2007: 226) on a 'collective *political* awareness'.

[56] Morstein-Marx (2004: 119-28).

providing their counterpoint. In the narratives of historiography, I have suggested, historians artfully or unconsciously capture effects which are analogous to the effects of crowd noise. Conversely, the reader can, in speculative mode, dwell on the individual syllables of an imagined crowd slogan, drawing them out in a series of repetitions within which an echo of *clamor* can be felt.

But the task is not merely to replicate *clamor*, which would maintain the illusion that it is possible to return to an archaic state before the irruption of the symbolic.[57] Rather, the ways in which *clamor* makes us consider language and discourse can provide other ways of hearing the dominant voice of historiography, the explanatory narrative which combines the modes of mimesis and metadiscourse.[58] The latter purports to be, in Rancière's words with which we began, 'the account by which a sonorous emission is understood as speech', yet, as we have just seen, the sound of the audience has the potential to take on this discursive role, and this enables us to think of noise as not merely disruptive of *logos*. The semiotic undertow of the very language in which the account is formulated both compromises and reinforces its authority; even as it partitions speech and noise, its own noise *constitutes* its persuasiveness. The opening sentence of Sallust's *Bellum Catilinae* provides an appropriate articulation of this dynamic.

> *Omnes homines qui sese student praestare ceteris animalibus summa ope niti decet ne vitam silentio transeant, veluti pecora quae natura prona atque ventri oboedientia finxit.* (*Cat*. 1.1)
>
> All humans who desire to stand out from the animal world ought to strive to the best of their ability, not to pass through their lives in silence, like the beasts which nature has made on all fours, obedient to the belly.

Sallust begins his analysis from first principles with the distinction between humans and beasts, conceived as an opposition not between speech and noise, but between sound and silence. Much later, sound will receive its content, and be sublimated into

[57] On the necessary reciprocity of glossolalia and interpretation, cf. de Certeau (1996: 36-7).
[58] Cf. Kahane (2007).

the written text. (*Cat*. 3.1) The silent beast is downward looking and navel-gazing by nature, while the human is or ought to be striving upwards—*praestare . . . summa ope*. Yet already in this opening sentence Sallust is both thinking and feeling through his concepts, as is evident also from the abundant alliterations of the preface. The beasts may go through their whole lives in silence, but the long *o* of *silentio* evokes their lowing, which in Sallust's view does not even merit recognition as noise. And that repressed sound is most evident in the onomatopoeic opening words *omnes homines*, the *mugitus* of the human collective. At the very moment where Sallust inaugurates his historical narrative as an analytical discourse of universal relevance—*logos* writ large—the semiotic pulsation of his words draws its power from the ever-present, underlying murmur of the *clamor populi*.